

ON METHODS OF IMPLEMENTING A NATIONAL MORALE PROGRAM

Margaret Mead

This is an experimental paper in several ways. The social scientist is confronted with the need to attempt to translate his abstractions into workable and practical rules. If he is to do so, he faces several tasks. His abstractions must to a degree become cruder, because the tools are not yet developed for applying more refined formulations. A student of Chinese culture can warn an American export firm of the different meaning of red in Chinese culture, or twins in a West African tribe suggest alterations in the use of red or twins as advertising symbols. If, however, he attempts to translate his insight into the character structure, the characteristic organizations of experience of different peoples, into action, the problem is one with which we have only just begun to cope. In this paper I have assumed that we can't assume a type of American character structure.' Specialists will immediately demur - in this stratified, sectionalized, heterogeneous and rapidly changing society, with its divergent European historical sources, any statement about American character, unless corrected for all these factors, plus race and religion, is hopelessly crude. But the problem I have set myself is how the applied anthropologist might help to implement a national morale program. I have taken as given the present political structure of this country, the trend towards centralized planning in Washington, the probability that this trend will be accentuated in these emergency times. Where, I asked, can we find a rationale which might guide such wholesale planning? That was the first question. And the second was: How can we include in the plan itself a compensatory element for the crudeness, the disregard of local, class, and religious differences, which it had to include. Finally, there is the problem that faces all those who would see science applied, that of communication. With this I have experimented also. I have tried to write this statement in a way which would make it at least partially meaningful to the working statesman.

The present organization of the Defense program into local and state committees, while emphasizing the importance of local, voluntary participation in the defense program, is not implemented to tap anything like the full resources of the American people. This is due to

failure to take the American character systematically into account.

In building local morale in 1941 we have to operate

with Americans as they are, not as we would like them to be. The typical American has very definite responses to leadership from the top. He is extraordinarily unresponsive to a Leader, to National appeals, to requests to become part of a National effort which is stimulated from the top. All such appeals of the sort used in Europe are based upon a different father-son relationship, different from the relationship we have in America. The European child admires his father, fears him, and wishes to take his place, in giving orders to others. The American child tolerates his father, who, however, is already a little out of date, and often can't speak English, or knows nothing about airplanes. The American boy is interested in getting on his own, getting a job and getting rid of his father's domination which is merely dependent upon the fact that father holds the purse strings. All through his childhood the American boy - and girl - is interested, not in becoming like the parents, which is the basis for the European types of nationalism, but in catching up with those boys and girls who are just a little bit older and bigger, beating those who are the same age or size, and keeping ahead of those who are a little bit smaller. His range of competition is very small; he is not concerned with grandiose dreams, as are children over whom an omnipotent father looms. To be 'grown up' to an American means, then, to be out from under - Dad can't tell him when to take the car, he has his own car nor can the National Government. He does not want to be told what to do from the top by the Government any more than he does by his own father. Depending on his father means being told what time to come in, and depending upon the National Government means going on relief in one form or another.

Analysis of the position of leaders in America and of the appeals they have to make will demonstrate this point. A candidate for presidency has to emphasize that he is just like anyone else, he was born on a farm, he hoed corn; if he has made a lot of money, he is wiser not to mention it. If he came from a family with superior social position, this is recognized as a political disadvantage which it takes consummate skill to overcome. The American people can most easily be persuaded to take an interest in a candidate if they feel he is just like them, only a little luckier, and so he made the grade. The fact that he made it must reassure them that they, too, are the stuff of which presidents are made or else

the political campaign doesn't catch their imaginations. The foreign-born, depressed groups and disallowed minorities may rally around a Leader whom they, out of habits of dependence and desperation, identify with a great white father. But not the average American. In the way in which Americans make moving picture stars into symbols of success, this same tendency is shown; the stars are not specially gifted, specially beautiful people - they are people just like themselves who had a break. Leadership in America means that the leader must identify with the individual average American - not that the people identify with him.

But a defense setup with a national chief, then state committees headed by ex-officio governors, who become by this very framework representatives of Washington rather than of the people of each state, tries to tap this very weak element in the American character - it says, in effect, to full-grown Americans: 'Wouldn't you like to pretend to be a big boy and come and sit for five minutes on the front seat with Daddy.' Now, because every American was once a little boy, so weak and small that it was fun to sit on the front seat with Daddy, this will make some appeal for a little while. And then comes the reaction - which I have got in small towns and in large - from the very people who have been serving on defense committees and looking as if they liked it. 'For heaven's sake, don't mention Defense.' 'We very much hope that the speaker of this evening won't mention defense.' 'The topic of the speech suggests that we won't have to hear any more about Defense.' This boredom and turning away is very suggestive of the child who says: 'Please may I be excused', and slips away from the table where the grown-ups are discussing dull, boring subjects. The American people are bored by the whole setup of the program, just as the British people were bored by the black-outs and the ARP precautions in the winter of 1939-1940. It has come down from the top; it hasn't any roots. It doesn't appeal to the American desire to do things oneself, and to SHOW those other guys on the next block, or the next ward, or the next town - that other Scout troop, the college team we play every year and usually lick.

A program which takes some nice little defense job done in Oshkosh or Sioux City and puts it, with an approving pat on the head, into a national magazine or a national newspaper, isn't enough. The boy who is pitching on the local team isn't trying to please his father, his uncles and his grandparents. He wants the other fellows to say he is good, and the fellows on the visiting team to think his team's lucky

to have him. Giving national applause to a local group, while temporarily gratifying, remains a pat on the head from a superior adult.

In other words, you don't get real grass roots by transplanting wilting tomato plants at 10 o'clock on a hot, dry July morning. The grass roots idea is sound, but it doesn't mean just transplanting an idea from a central hothouse to a local ex-officio defense council. The grass has got to grow there, in the local soil. Each town, each ward, each church, each labor union local has got to feel 'WE did this and we did it better than that other town, ward, church, or labor union local.' They don't want to be fake emissaries of the national government, they don't want to be patted on the head. They want to feel grown up, full of beans and 'raring' to go.

What could be done to utilize all these drives in the American character to the full?

(1) It is necessary to organize local committees around NATURAL LEADERS instead of around people who are put in ex-officio. A governor of the state may have been a natural leader or the result of a political deal. But the minute he is appointed to a defense council because he is a governor - that's the end for most Americans. WHO's heading this thing, boys? Oh, the State Governors. Ohhh - (there's a sinking sound in the voice, and the recognition that this isn't really important). Some men are strong enough so that the words 'THE MAYOR' mean a given individual, with a name and a personality - and that's all right. But in this country you have to be stronger to lead as mayor or governor than to lead without the props of office. To the American question: 'What'd he do, to be chosen?' - if the answer is 'They are just appointing all the mayors or all the state governors', the response is: 'Oh shucks.'

To make local groups take the defense job seriously, therefore, the leaders must be natural leaders. They may be governors or mayors, but they must be chosen for themselves, by their own communities, not appointed from the top because they are already heads of Chambers of Commerce or Welfare Councils. The political chicanery and stuffed shirt atmosphere which surrounds officials gets attached even to natural leaders who were originally chosen, by their own groups, for some other job, if they are then appointed ex-officio. Getting local groups started around natural leaders requires a technical field staff who will know how to get local communities going.

(2) It is necessary to develop lines of local, regional, organizational rivalry and emulation which

will use to the full the American's desire to show the other fellow who is near his size just what he can do. Such lines would require some preliminary work, but work for which most of the information is already available. It would merely have to be organized. The national and regional offices would need to have MAPS OF NATURAL RIVALRY LINES, for cities of certain sizes, within certain regions - e.g., cities in New England or in the Corn Belt, and also for every important sort of voluntary grouping. If a local Odd Fellows Lodge in Terre Haute does something worth encouraging, the technical staff would see to it that that was fully publicized in the appropriate Odd Fellows publication which reached other lodges of about the same size and strength. Every item of news of this sort would be carefully organized to appeal to rivalry inside own organization. The size and strength of the lodge would be prominently figured, so that every reader could make the necessary classification. 'In our class, but a little larger. We could beat them.' or 'Gosh, a smaller lodge than ours, we better get busy.' These are the only two comments which will be of any use. The activities of a much bigger lodge will call forth no interest at all.

None of this need be left to chance. For every identified good local plan or activity, or local invention, or conspicuous record, there could be definite lines of publicity which would utilize this sort of rivalry. Whenever lines of rivalry cross, both sets could be used, e.g., if a small upper New York State University, working with a nearby community, did a particularly good job of assimilating 150 new families of skilled workers, then this activity would be publicized in other New York State towns of about the same size, and possibly across the border in Pennsylvania in other small denominational colleges, and particularly where small colleges and defense industries in small towns coincided. Through all of this, two sorts of rivalry would be invoked: 'We can beat those others inside our organization', and 'Our organization can beat that other organization.' The local Baptist Church could be vying with all other Baptist Churches in that state, and also with the local Methodist Church whose activities, stimulated by the desire to beat the local Baptist Church, would also be publicized among all other Methodist churches in the state. CROSS CUTTING RIVALRY maps would be used to facilitate the publicizing.

What would these local committees do? At present a great deal of discouragement is being produced because local communities keep coming for-

ward with national plans, for nation-wide volunteer registration, or vigilance committees, or ways of collecting aluminum - plans which national planning offices consider unwise, or premature. So the national offices thank the local patriots but tell them to please stop - for the moment. And the result is stalemate. If local community action is to reinforce and strengthen national action, there are several things which must be taken into account.

(1) Local communities must be guided toward work on real problems which have to be solved and which, if possible, have several answers. Assimilating defense workers, cushioning the shock of consumer deprivation and consumer disgruntlement, planning defense bond buying by group action, working out community plans for implementing nutrition suggestions - all of these activities can be variously organized. There is no single right answer. Furthermore, the problems which are suggested to the local groups should be a carefully considered mixture of jobs that can be finished and jobs that can never be finished but will go on, through the emergency and beyond. In the suggestions for types of problems which would be made by field staff to local committees, the proportions of these three types of problems would be adjusted to the state of local morale. If morale was very weak and halting, then two or three tasks which could be quickly and satisfactorily accomplished would be suggested as the things on which the national government needed advance experimental work done. As morale grew stronger, longer tasks, on which progress was possible, but in which there would be less sense of finish, would be introduced. Then, when morale slumped from the heights it had gained - as it probably would as the Emergency came to seem to be a constant state without any surge or excitement in it - a new set of problems, reaching beyond the Emergency, would be introduced. Technical field workers would have to be trained to gauge the tempo of each community, and to make correct guesses as to what kind of project would be most valuable to morale.

(2) No local community should be asked to work on a problem for which the Federal Government has already settled on an answer not yet announced. If for instance an alteration in the draft age were already settled upon, this should not come up for discussion or consideration in local forums or roundtables. This is simply a way of saying that the whole plan must be bona fide, and definite safeguards must be introduced into the administrative machinery to see that it is bona fide. It must not be

a gentle, indirect way of making each local community do just what the Federal Government has already decided upon. If this is done, it will merely be another and more vicious form of mass manipulation which will inevitably recoil and become a boomerang in lowered morale, lowered confidence in the government and a lowered sense of individual initiative.

(3) The local groups should be asked to work on real problems, stated in terms of already discernible trends. If for instance, it is clear that trailer camps are to be the form of defense housing in a given region, then the local groups in communities where defense industries are located, or better still are going to be located, should be told that some sort of trailer camp is to be the answer, not merely that they should try to think out some form of defense housing. Unless this precaution is taken, local groups will spend energy inventing unusable solutions which will be shown by the result to have been a waste of time - and perhaps a morale hoax. But if twenty local groups are all working on how to fit trailer camps into their local geographic set-up, some of the work they do is bound to be relevant to the final decision even if they don't hit on any world-shaking addition to the plans which the government has in mind. When the trailer camp is set up, they can at least say, 'We planned that - except of course for that idea about sewerage, the government got that from that Business men's defense planning crowd over in Lancaster.' A sense of pride and achievement can be combined here with the repetition of the rivalry incentive. 'The next time a job comes along we'll show that Lancaster crowd. Most of our boys were asleep on their feet this time. But you wait.'

(4) If full use is to be made of these local groups, they should be encouraged to turn in very full reports, clippings from local papers describing their work, etc. which would itself provide a mine of information on morale, which could be analyzed by qualified experts to show morale trends in the country. Such experts should of course be working against an adequate opinion-testing background, both qualitative and quantitative, that is, intensive continuous field work on the state of morale, and wider, less intensive opinion-sampling polls.

(5) In the publicizing of any local group's solution of a problem, the solution can be hand-picked for its best elements and those elements can be stated in planned juxtaposition to other elements in the total plan which appear necessary. The plans would be shorn of every feature which seemed def-

initely contradictory or impracticable. If this was done at the first stage - when one local group's plan was being publicized along its natural rivalry lines - the competing and emulating groups which would try improving on this solution, would be working on something which was already better than the original. This device would provide a quick method of stepping up efficiency, a progressive movement process - the exact opposite of the degeneration which sets in when words are repeated in the children's game of 'Whispering down the lane.'

(6) The lines of rivalry would be kept fluid, by the CROSS CUTTING RIVALRY MAPS discussed above. So a local labor union would not be encouraged into an endless chain of emulation with another labor union, or another local of the same union, or another local of the same union in another nearby city, etc. alone, but all of these emulative lines would be mixed. Otherwise deadlocks would occur in which the attention of the groups would be fixed upon beating the permanent rivals, not merely using rivalry as a driving force to work out their own problems.

(7) Local groups could be used as testing grounds, not only for details of how some new policy could be worked out, but perhaps more importantly for the morale difficulties which might develop around it. With a knowledge of the American character, and a knowledge of the local scene, the technical staff could spot and diagnose those early signs of trouble and it would give the particular Federal agency involved in the particular plan time to work out correctives. If there had been time to have some trial drafts for instance, more of the factors which were most damaging to morale might have been eliminated. Nutrition plans involving radical changes in food habits may set up utterly unforeseen psychological difficulties which may seriously affect morale. Signs of these difficulties might be picked up in the discussions around local plans, in the participating members of the local committee's stated and implied objections to 'having medicine put in their bread, ugh', for instance. Once a policy has become a national emergency program, with all of the investment of prestige and planning, it may be too risky to have too much free experimentation with the expression of disapproval. But when such a policy is merely being discussed in a local committee, which is on its mettle to help form the policy, the expression of distaste, repugnance, contempt or fear, would be healthy and harmless.

What main lines would the program take? This obviously is the biggest problem of all. It is impos-

sible to indicate in detail what the local groups should do, what they should be told, how their efforts should be phrased, until we have a more clearly determined National direction. But if the machinery were actually worked out and ready to be put into effect, then the minute a more definite cue is given, it could go into force. Working out the machinery would mean training an adequate technical field staff and assembling the material necessary to make the NATURAL RIVALRY MAPS and the plans for PUBLICIZING ALONG NATURAL RIVALRY LINES.

It is also possible to work out now some guiding premises on the relationship between American character and the national direction.

If it were decided that for another six months Defense was still to be the keynote, then a good deal could be said about ways in which the idea could be handled better. If we are merely getting ready to meet a threat, it doesn't fit the American's ideal of himself to be hurrying. 'Hitler is a threat, that is, he has a bigger gun than we happen to have on hand. Okay, we'll make ourselves a gun bigger than he has. Let's get on with the job.' But hurry doesn't fit in. 'People only hurry when they are scared pink or when they are going somewhere.' Americans won't admit they are scared and it wouldn't be good for morale if they were. And Defense isn't going anywhere, it's like paying a bill that was mislaid, or an extra income tax assessment which the Income tax department finds out was unpaid - two years later. Not only can we not gear high morale to a defense program, but it is actually a morale error to try to do so. If we use high pressure methods to enlist interest in something which is essentially routine and

unattractive, an unpleasant, inescapable duty - all we do is to discredit the methods. Once it can be made clear that we are going somewhere - as for instance to win the War - then Americans can be enlisted in complete participation if some such genuine local participation scheme as has been outlined is used. But even to go somewhere, to reshape the world, to wipe Hitler off the map, or however it is phrased, full American participation can not be gained by high pressure salesmanship, or national propaganda. In 1917 it was a new experience for Americans to be part of the National Show. Getting orders direct from Washington, shouting the same slogans that everyone else was shouting because Washington said: 'These are the words', had a certain appeal of novelty, short-lived because it didn't fit in to the American character really, but still an appeal. But since that time we've had the disillusionment with the last War and its propaganda, endless lessons in how advertisers get their results, detailed efforts to make us distrust German propaganda and so all propaganda. That is one side of the story. The other side is that since the depression, millions of Americans have been in touch with Washington - through WPA, and CCC camps! The relationship between Washington and a small town in Nebraska has ceased to have even its 1917 spurious glamour. It won't work. Instead of 'Come and ride on the front seat with Daddy, Jimmy my boy, and I'll let you pretend to hold on to the wheel for a minute while I steer', we've got to substitute: 'Got to get this engine running smoothly. Come here, Jim, and see if you can't stop this friction. We have to think up some way of getting going quick! We're going places!

COMMUNITY RESETTLEMENT IN A DEPRESSED COAL REGION

Frederick L. W. Richardson, Jr.

I. THE COMMUNITY:

Human Problems in Planning a New Community
A. INTRODUCTION

In 1937, in one of the northern Appalachian coal States, a new charitable corporation was formed, the purpose of which, as stated in the by-laws, was:

'.....the rehabilitation and assistance of industrial and agricultural workers.....unable to obtain sufficient suitable employment.....'

The intention of this corporation was to concentrate on finding a solution for the situation created by the mass unemployment of stranded coal

miners in the Appalachian coal fields.

Everyone is familiar with the fact that the coal industry has been going through a major reorganization and retrenchment brought about by the convergence of many forces - over-expansion of the industry during World War I, loss of markets to coal substitutes (oil, gas, and hydro-electric power), increased efficiency in coal consumption, rapid mechanization of mining processes, and government control and regulation of the industry.

Coupled with these conditions is the fact that mining is an extractive industry, unable to support